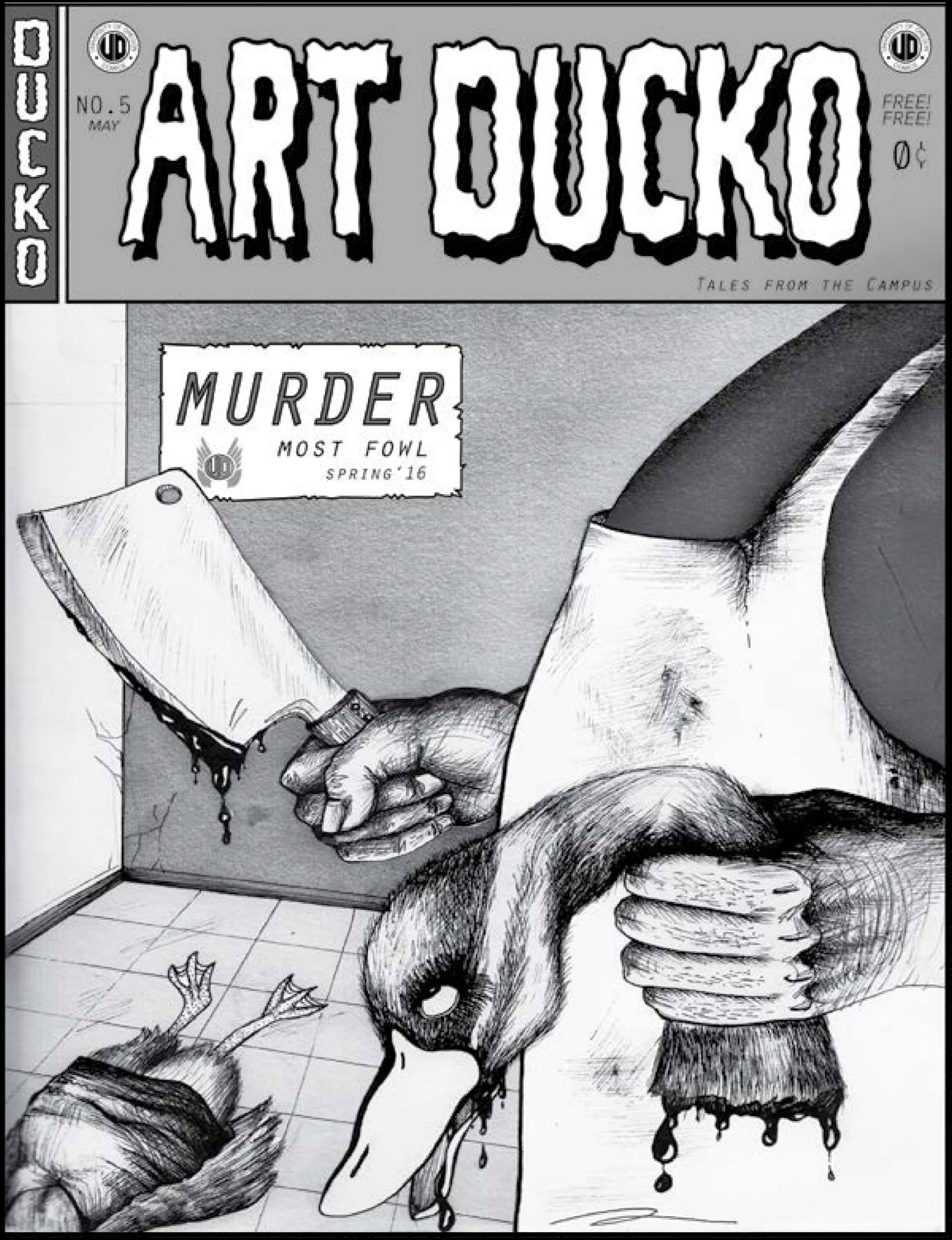
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TALES FROM THE CAMPUS
MURDER
MOST FOWL
SPRING '16

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RIP TIDE

POEM BY HELENA MANVILLE // ART BY ANA LIND

I THOUGHT THIS WAS A GOOD DEAL.

ALWAYS BELIEVED IT MADE US CLOSER.

ALWAYS BELIEVED I WAS THE DOG WHO BELONGED WITH YOU.

AND JUST LIKE THAT,

WE ARE IN THE KITCHEN AGAIN

I'M SAYING I'LL FIGHT

I'M GRILLING BREAD

AND YOU ARE JUST LAUGHING.

OR WE ARE ON THE FLOOR IN YOUR ROOM—TALKING ABOUT WHAT WE SHOULD DO

BECAUSE YOU FEEL TRAPPED

AND I LIKE TO PRETEND I DO TOO.

THE HUMAN RECORD FOR HOLDING YOUR BREATH UNDERWATER IS ELEVEN MINUTES THIRTY FIVE SECONDS

AND CHILDREN STILL DROWN

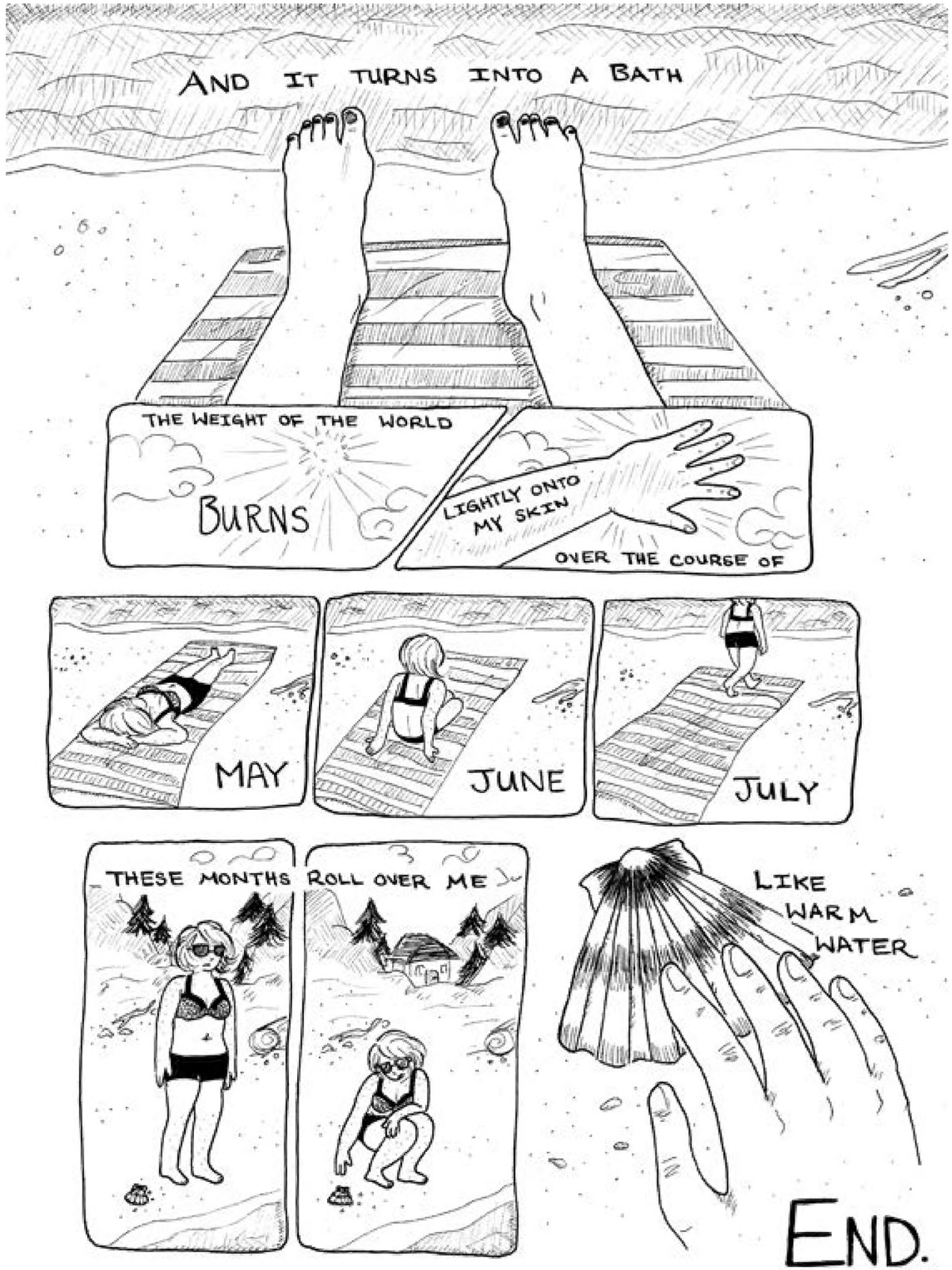
IN AN INCH OF WATER.

I REMEMBER

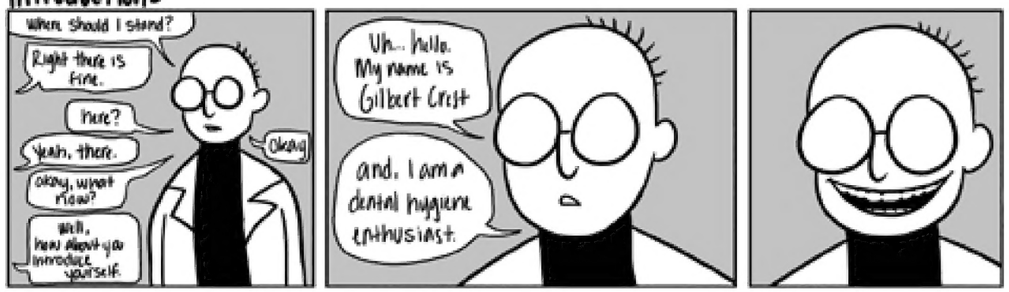
HOW YOUR HAIR FEELS IN MY HANDS
LIKE I NEVER LEFT
LIKE YOU NEVER CUT IT SHORT
MY HEAD BY YOUR NECK
HOT TEARS FALLING LIKE A MONSOON
...
FROM MY EYES
TO YOUR SKIN.

SO IT TOOK ME MONTHS
TO GET UP AND LEAVE
A LOVE
THAT WAS NEVER REALLY LOVE
JUST ME, PINING, LIKE THE TREES.
MONTHS OF
HOW MUCH
DOES THIS HURT
COMPARED TO THIS

HOW LONG
CAN I CRY IN THE SHOWER UNTIL SOMEONE NOTICES SOME OF THE DROPLETS
i'm sorry i don't feel the same way
TASTE LIKE SALT?
AND IT GETS BETTER


AND IT TURNS INTO A BATH
THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD
BURNS
LIGHTLY ONTO MY SKIN
OVER THE COURSE OF
MAY
JUNE
JULY
THESE MONTHS ROLL OVER ME
LIKE WARM WATER
END.

Introductions



So exciting

I found out about this Expo just by chance.
I overheard a man mention it on the subway and I followed him cross-country to here.
DENTAL HYGEINE CONVENTION
This is all so exciting.

Welcome

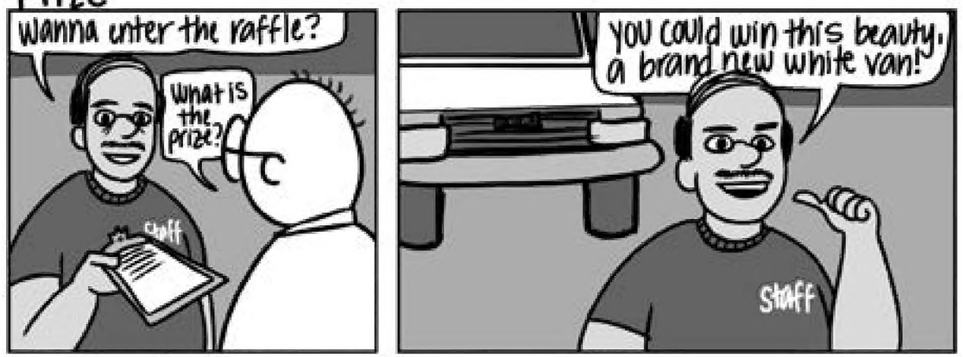
Shared Interests

Welcome! We love seeing new faces! Here's a pamphlet of speakers.
It's amazing to see so many people who share my passion for dental hygiene
Uhhh... Yeah?
STAFF

Choices, Choices

What kinds of seminars are going on today?
There seems to be quite the selection...
Inescapable knots
Duct tape 101
Cooking with Hannibal
How to keep your workspace clean
Best solvents to dissolve bone
That one sounds good.

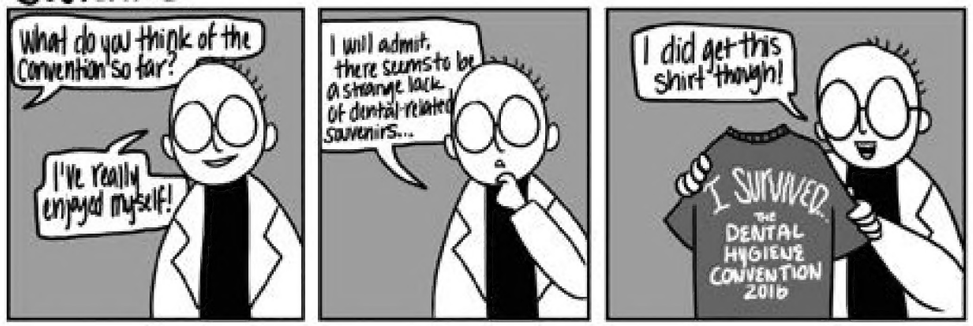
Prize



Merchandise

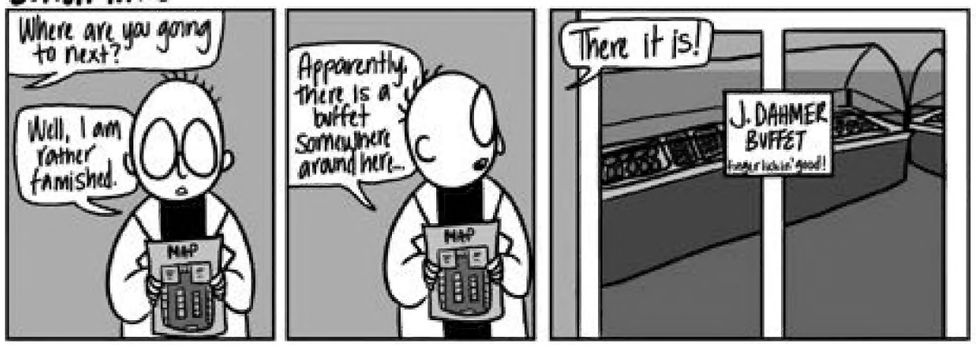
Dear God!
We accept visa, american express, and mastercard
MERCHANDISE
Is that an Axon Scrubber 2000x tooth brush!? They're so rare!

Souvenirs


What do you think of the convention so far?
I've really enjoyed myself!
I will admit, there seems to be a strange lack of dental-related souvenirs...
I did get this shirt though!
I SURVIVED THE DENTAL HYGIENE CONVENTION 2016

Funny gal

Lunch Time


Where are you going to next?
Well, I am rather famished.
MAP
Apparently, there is a buffet somewhere around here...
There it is!
J. DAHMER BUFFET
human lickin' good!

Stains

Sir, I don't mean to alarm you, but you appear to have a front porch stain on your jacket.
Don't worry, I got that on the job a week ago.
Enjoy the convention!
What a nice man!
Now where's the dessert bar?
BLOOD & GORE

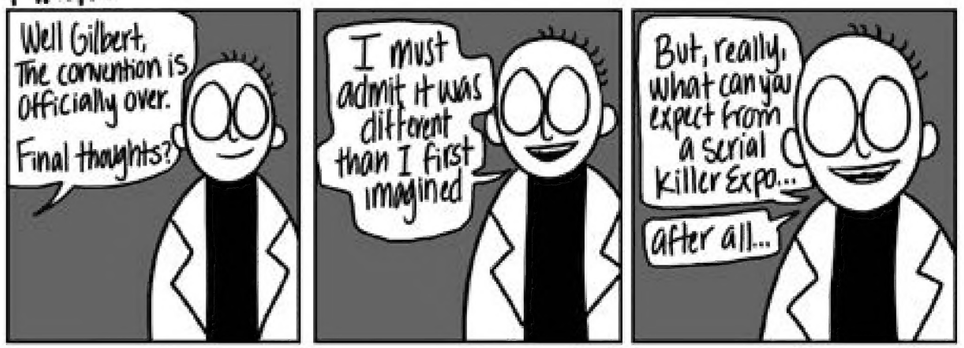
STAFF

I still can't believe how many people are here!
STAFF
WE'RE JUST DYING TO MEET YOU!
Well, you know, honey...
There's more of us out there than you would think...

Keychains

They were handing out free gift bags!
THANK YOU
It comes with some candy, a scalpel, pens, an event tumbler, discounts on next year's pass...
Even a keychain!
It's very realistic.

Finale


Well Gilbert, the convention is officially over. Final thoughts?
I must admit it was different than I first imagined
But, really, what can you expect from a serial killer Expo...
after all...

ATTEMPTED MURDER!

THE WAR ON COMICS & THE LEGACY OF EC

by Ben Saunders

Many Americans remember the 1950s as a simpler, happier time: a period of national unity and prosperity built around "traditional" family values. But these feelings of nostalgia owe more to TV shows such as Leave It To Beaver and Father Knows Best than reality. In fact, the 1950s were marked by racist persecution, Cold War paranoia, and an anti-feminist backlash against the freedoms women had come to enjoy during the World War II era.

It was also the decade that America declared war on comic books.

The comic book was an upstart medium in those days. Blatantly commercial and sensationalist, most comics were just crude, dumb fun. But the nature of the readership was changing. During World War II, millions of comics had been shipped in care packages to troops overseas and many demobbed GIs kept up their comic book reading habit after the war ended. Meanwhile, the first generation of comic book readers had begun to grow up, and while some left the art form behind along with other pastimes of childhood, others were looking for stories that spoke more directly to their interests as teenagers and young adults.

And as the audience matured, so did the medium. Interest in superheroes waned, giving way to other genres such as Crime, Romance, Westerns, and Science Fiction. Comic book creators grew in aesthetic ambition, and pushed to explore more sophisticated themes and concepts. However, no rating system existed, and most newsvendors and distributors did not distinguish between titles that were obviously aimed at young children and those aimed at older teens and adults. At the same time, scare-mongering journalists and opportunistic politicians were fomenting public concerns about the negative effects of comic books on young minds; and in the early 1950s, anti-comics sentiments rose to the level of a full-scale moral panic.

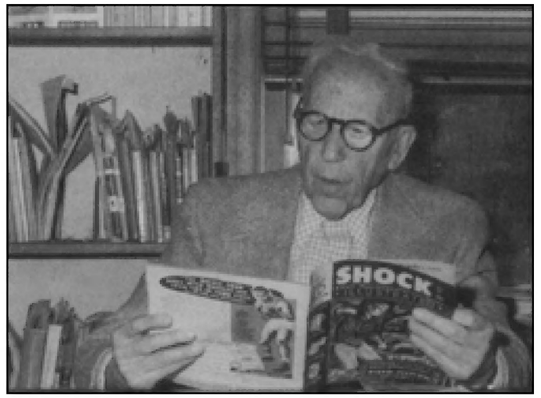
"[comics are the] marijuana of the nursery; the bane of the bassinet; the horror of the house; the curse of kids, and a threat to the future"

The opinions of the anti-comics lobby were expressed in popular magazines, newspapers, radio talk shows, and TV specials — all warning parents about the danger that comics posed to their children's moral wellbeing and intellectual development. In retrospect, much of the criticism published against the comic industry seems as sensationalist than material it condemned. For example, the Saturday Review of Literature published an article entitled "The Case Against the Comics" that identified the art form as the "marijuana of the nursery; the bane of the bassinet; the horror of the house; the curse of kids, and a threat to the future". Under the headline of "A National Disgrace", published by the Chicago Daily News, journalist and children's author Sterling North described comics as:

> "Badly drawn, badly written, and badly printed - a strain on the young eyes and young nervous systems - the effects of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant. Their crude blacks and reds spoils a tchild's natural sense of colour; their hypodermic injection of sex and murder make the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories. Unless we want a coming generation even more ferocious than the present one, parents and teachers throughout America must band together to break the 'comic' magazine."

1.The Case Against Comics," The Saturday Review of Literature, March 20, 1948, n.p.

But the anti-comics movement found it's most articulate champion and figurehead in Dr. Fredric Wertham, a prominent New York-based psychiatrist. Wertham (pictured right) published several articles asserting a direct connection between comics and juvenile delinquency, going so far as to claim that one could not hope to "understand present-day juvenile delinquency if you do not take into account the pathogenic and pathoplastic influence of the comic books, that is, the way in which they cause trouble or determine the form that trouble takes." Comics, he insisted, "immunize a whole generation against the recognition of cruelty and violence and stimulate unhealthy sexual attitudes: sadism, masochism, frigidity."



Wertham's claims were taken seriously, and the picture he painted frightened parents everywhere. His opinions were widely promulgated in the popular press and in a successful book, melodramatically entitled *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954). Of course, there were a few educators, psychiatrists, and journalists who disputed Wertham's studies; and today it has been established that he did not merely overstate his case, but distorted and even fabricated his data in the service of his crusade. However, at the time, the damage was done.

Horror Comics Go Up In Flames

Wertham's theories would have a profound impact on the economic and aesthetic development of the comics industry for the next two decades.

As concerns grew, parents and teachers joined forces to have comic books banned in schools. Several municipalities began proposing legislation to limit and impede the distribution of comics. One such law, passed in New York in 1955, decreed that selling and distributing comics to minors was a criminal offense, punishable by a fine of up to $500 and/or a year of jail time. (The law was of course ruled unconstitutional — as lawmakers of the time must have known it would be — but the fact that it could be passed at all indicates that there were votes to be found in pandering to the anti-comics lobby.) Other communities took matters into their own hands, and went so far as to go door-to-door collecting comic books and holding public mass burnings as a sign of protest towards the material being published. One of the most well-known of these burnings was held in Binghamton, New York; it was followed by similar comics burnings in Missouri, Chicago, and Vancouver. Thousands of comics were gathered and destroyed. Finally, in 1954, the comics industry found itself under the scrutiny of a United States Special Committee headed by Senator Estes Kefauver. Publishers were

"[EC Comics] rebuked racists and warmongers, critiqued the paranoid state, and exposed the dark underside of heterosexual domesticity with tales of jealousy, hypocrisy, and murder"

2 "Sterling North, "A National Disgrace," The Chicago Daily News, May 8, 1940, n.p.

dragged before Senate committees and interrogated like criminals. Dr. Wertham was among those called to testify. He repeated his claims that comics damaged the ethical development of children and predisposed them towards delinquency later in life. "If it were my task, Mr. Chairman, to teach children delinquency, to tell them how to rape and seduce girls, how to hurt people, how to break into stores, how to cheat, how to forge, how to do any known crime, if it were my task to teach that, I would have to enlist the crime comic book industry."

In reaction, the beleaguered industry responded by establishing the Comics Code Authority in an attempt self-regulation. The code restricted the topics that could be treated in comics and denied distribution to all but the most anodyne material; and unlike previous attempts at self-censorship, the code was strictly enforced by NYC judge, Charles Murphy. What's more, comic book wholesalers refused to handle any comic that came to them without the CCA's seal of approval. As a result, several companies were forced out of business, and the artistic development of the medium was hindered (though not quite arrested) for many years to come.

"EC comics were provocative, excessive, and sometimes even sadistic — but (unlike many of their competitors) even their most grotesque material was leavened with a sense of irony."

No comic book company played a more central role in these events than Entertaining Comics — better known to fans all over the world as EC. The writers and artists at EC fought a subversive war against 1950s conservatism in such classic titles as Tales from the Crypt, Weird Science, Shock SuspenStories, and Frontline Combat. They rebuked racists and warmongers, critiqued the paranoid state, and exposed the dark underside of heterosexual domesticity with tales of jealousy, hypocrisy, and murder. They tackled these issues in stories like "The Guilty," in which a bigoted sheriff arrests a black man for the murder of a white woman — on the testimony of a white man who later turns out to be the killer. (In the shocking but all too believable final scene of this story the sheriff shoots the accused man in the back before claiming he was killed while trying to escape). Other stories tackled the specter of McCarthyism, the KKK, the death penalty, anti-Semitism, and various forms of capitalistic exploitation.

There were also plenty of sensationalist tales of a less political kind in the EC canon, such as the notorious "Foul Play," in which a team of baseball players takes revenge after one of their own is murdered, dismembering his killer and playing baseball with his body parts. Perhaps even more shocking (to parents) were the stories in which the antagonists get away with their crimes without punishment, as is the case in "The Orphan," in which a little girl kills her father and frames her mother so that she can live with her aunt. EC comics were provocative, excessive, and sometimes even sadistic — but (unlike many of their competitors) even their most grotesque material was leavened with a sense of irony. Indeed, in 1952 the satirical side of EC was given free rein when they launched a humor comic called MAD, devoted to parodying the more sanitized pop-cultural products of the era with merciless precision.

Unfortunately, the stories and artwork that made EC such a groundbreaking and important publisher also made it a target for the anti-comics backlash. When Wertham appeared to galvanize and channel public disapproval, it was EC that took the brunt of criticism. Bill Gaines (pictured above) was the only publisher of horror comics who spoke on behalf of the genre at Kefauver's Senate hearings.

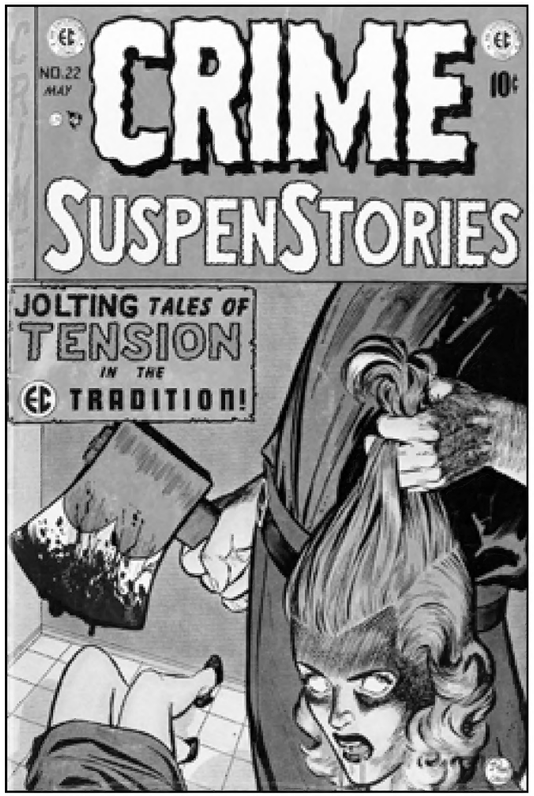
3. Dr. Frederic Wertham, qtd. "Afternoon Session: Testimony of Dr. Frederic Wertham," TheComicBooks.com, ed. Jamie Coville, http://www.thecomicbooks.com/wertham.html

4. William Gaines, qtd. "Testimony of William Gaines," TheComicBooks.com, ed. Jamie Coville, http://www.thecomicbooks.com/gaines.html

As a result, he became the face of the industry at the worst possible time. With a scapegoat so readily available, many of the other comic publishers turned their backs on Gaines — even agreeing to ban the words "crime," "horror," and "terror" from comic book titles, when it was clear that EC that would be the company most negatively affected by such a move. Unable to get approval for most of his stories, Gaines eventually ceased publishing — with the exception of Mad, which escaped the restrictions of the Comics Code by becoming a magazine. Mad was the only EC title to survive the war on comics; it went on to become one of the most successful American magazines of the 20th century.

EC's heyday as a comic book publisher only lasted for a short time; but the effect on American pop culture is still visible today. The EC company was home to some of the most influential artists in the history of American comics, including Wallace Wood, whose science fiction tales shaped the young imaginations of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg; Graham Ingels, whose ghastly drawings fascinated future masters of horror such as Stephen King and George Romero; and Harvey Kurtzman, an expressive, exuberant cartoonist now widely regarded as one of the great American satirists of the 20th century. The stories that EC published helped inspire R.L. Stine and his series, Goosebumps, which brought tales of horror and delight to a whole new generation. EC even found their way to the TV screen in 1989 with Tales from the Crypt; most of the episodes of the popular horror anthology show were based on specific EC stories. The series ran until 1996 and helped launch the careers of many celebrities (including Brad Pitt, Whoopi Goldberg, and Ewan McGregor). And of course, the influence of EC on later comic book creators — from the 1960s underground to the contemporary mainstream — was incalculable.

Thanks to this network of extended influences, the creative explosion of EC comics continues to reverberate today. In fact, the rise and fall of the company stands as a pivotal story in pop culture history, as well as one of the most significant episodes in comic book history.



Want to know more? The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art on University of Oregon's campus is hosting the largest exhibition of EC comic art and memorabilia ever displayed in an accredited American museum. The exhibition, Aliens, Monsters, and Madmen: The Art of EC Comics, will be open to student from May 14 to July 10, 2016. (There will also be a reception and party on the evening of Friday, May 13th.) Attend at your own risk — and rediscover the achievements of EC comics!

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9
STORY + ART : BRIXTON MORLEY

PLANET THEMISKYRA, a small satellite out in space
a peaceful planet dominated by a native race...

Ha
Ha hah

hahahahaaa
Of Amazons

BOINK
their population concentrated in the capital Chajasa on the shores of river Thermodon...

and ruled by—
HIPPOLYTE!

YOU ARE ONE HARD LADY TO FIND FIRST THING IN THE MORNING, I'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE!

huff

huff

ALLEO I JUST WOKE UP

YOU DIDN'T WASTE TIME BUMPIN' INTO DEIA'S SON...

... YOU'RE SO OLD FASHIONED AELLO,

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO REMIND YOU?

I SAY KILL 'EM ALL --UNLESS THEY'RE WELL H-

MEN HAVE JUST AS MUCH A RIGHT TO FREE EXISTENCE AS WE DO... THEY ARE NOT TO BE ROOTED IN OUR BEDS, TO THE DISPOSAL OF OUR PLEASURE.

WILL THAT ATTITUDE FOREVER ECLIPSE YOUR UNDERSTANDING FROM THE POSSIBILITIES OF EQUALITY?

YOU

BETCHA'

THEN LET US CHANGE THE SUBJECT. WHAT WAS THAT WAS SO IMPORTANT?

OH YEAH, THE SUMMIT IS MEETING HALF AN HOUR EARLY...

MEANWHILE

Incoming call from sir Eurystheus

Incoming call from sir Eurystheus

Incoming call

I HEAR YA ANNOYING BITCH

BEEP

HOW IS YOUR NINTH TASK COMING, HERCULES?

WE MAKE CONTACT WITHIN AN HOUR

RETURN WITH THE BELT OF THE AMAZON QUEEN...

AND TAKE CARE, HERCULES,

FOR THEY ARE A CUNNING AND WARLIKE RACE WHO HATE MALES

IF YOU FAIL IN THIS CHALLENGE, THEN YOU WILL NEVER BE REDEEMED IN THE EYES OF THE GODS

I WILL SUCCEED. NO MATTER THE COST.

MY PEOPLE... HOW GLAD I AM TO SHARE YOUR JOYS, AND SORROWS.

I HOPE THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS... AND THAT OUR HEARTS MAY GROW

...HUH?

WHAT THE- A SHIP?!

CRA SH!

I TOLD YOU - PUT DOWN THE DAMN TERRAIN GAUGE!

YES, BUT ONLY WHEN WE WERE ALREADY CRASHING!

TO ME! WE FIND HIPPOLYTE, AND HOPE SHE IS GENEROUS IN OUR QUEST

...EVER SEEN A PINCHED OFF TIT BEFORE?

A HALF GOD?

AN AMAZON?

NO NEED TO FIND ME, SON OF ZEUS AND ALCMENE.

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO OUR PROVINCE? WE NEED NOT FOR MEN HERE.

OURS IS A PEACEFUL MISSION, MADE IN THE NAME OF KING EURYSTHEUS.

WE COME TO CLAIM THE BELT IN HIS HONOR.

YET HE DOES NOT COME TO WIN IT FOR HIMSELF? STRANGE ARE THE WAYS OF MEN...

BUT I WILL HONOR YOUR REQUEST- YOU MAY HAVE IT, AS A TOKEN OF OUR HOSPITALITY AND DIPLOMACY.

Yet another watched this scene, and saw her Queen surrounded by aliens allied to a monstrous deformed half god. She saw only an attack. Alone, she must raise the cry to save her sister in arms.

THE QUEEN IS BEING TAKEN!

The Queen?!

Who dares!

A man?!

Here?

Before its too late!

ALIENS WITH A HALF GOD HAS SURROUNDED HER!

HASTE TO THE RIVER MOUTH!

The Queen!

TREACHEROUS WHORES!

I CAN HEAR THE SONG OF BATTLE FAINTLY ALL AROUND ME

IT IS DROWNED OUT BY THE DEATH THESE HANDS HAVE WROUGHT BEFORE ME

A WIFE...

SCREAMING

CHLDREN...

BLOODIED

THE THREE JUDGES OF THE DEAD

COME BEFORE ME.

MAY THE GODS MARK THIS INJUSTICE.

KNIGHT princess

STORY BY
CODY ORMSBEE

ART BY
EMILY PRESTON

Please, my lady, we really must return.

Don't be silly.

I still haven't fought a dragon!

But my lady! That is a job for knights, not—

I AM A KNIGHT! And not you nor father nor anyone—

ROAR

I think we should run.

Zzzz...

My lady, we must go now

Shush!

ROAR

ROAR

DEAR GOD IT'S A GRISHAW!

I thought they didn't come this far north! We should-

DIE!!!

DRAGON!

THUNK

TWANG

I think it likes me.

My lady, we should run now, while this thing is still calm!

Absolutely not!

That "thing" is now my pet. I shall name it Herbert, or maybe Snaps?

Well, then why don't we take Herbert... back to the castle?

I'm sure your father will be very impressed.

No. We are not going back yet.

But... but... my lady! Why?

I am a knight. I need to fight a REAL dragon!

Oh dear...

Onward, noble steed!

ROAR

The End

Forging Silver :

FROM WORKING IN MOTION TO WORKING IN PANELS

An Interview with Stephan Franck - *Conducted by Tyler Crissman*

Stephan Franck is a director, writer, animator, and comics creator. His comics series Silver is a crime-noir-meets-vampires adventure. In it, conman James Finnigan learns of vampire lord Drah-Khann's treasure: a great relic of silver — the metal that hurts, yet allures, vampires. Finn aims to steal Drah-Khann's treasure from under his nose, with a crew including a psychic boy and a vampire slayer proficient with her sword. Silver, in all its black-and-white, zip-a-tone glory, currently has six issues, collected in two volumes.

Art Ducko: How did Silver start? And why did you choose to publish through your own company rather than going through a pre-existing independent publisher like Image Comics?

Stephan Franck: Silver is a story that I've had with me for a long time. I had originally conceived it as a movie script, but these days it's a hard road for a big movie not based on a pre-existing franchise. Even if a movie sells, the studio development process can become very tortuous, as there's no published "canon" to keep everyone on track with the original vision. At the same time, I had been longing to get back into comics. I've been a hard-core comics fan since I could read, and was doing comics through college, but then, animation took over everything, and comics became the road not taken. I was missing that art form, and began to envision Silver as a graphic novel. I have a love for the graphic novel form, works like The Dark Knight Returns, or Watchmen, or The Long Halloween. Those to me are more than just completed arcs in a series. They're singular pieces of art and literature, with great sophistication, narrative and thematic integrity, but also with the guilty-pleasure factor cranked up to 11. It also became clear that to preserve the autonomy of the project, I should publish it myself through Dark Planet. We're talking artistic autonomy of course, but also keeping control of the marketing, the publishing schedule, steering of the media rights, et cetera. It's probably not the way to go for everyone, but for someone who has an entrepreneurial spirit, it is a great adventure.

AD: You mentioned wanting to get back into comics. What came before Silver?

SF: Silver is my first comic done in a professional context. I did a lot of comics in my formative years, from early childhood through college, but that was just me trying to learn the craft. I was mainly trying to copy artists I admired. From John Romita and Neal Adams when I was a kid, to Frank Miller and Howard Chaykin in college. Somewhere in there I bought an airbrush to try to emulate Richard Corben's incredible colors. Needless to say, it looked nothing like Corben. I even had a Ray Moore period where I was trying to recreate his kind of 1930's pulp adventure. I don't think I have any of this early work, and I wish I did. Thinking back on it, it sounds like it contained most of the influences converging in Silver. But from the time I entered Gobelins School of the Image, until 3 years ago, it was all animation.

AD: How was the transition from working in animation to working in comics?

SF: To tell the truth, I was a little apprehensive. I knew I could handle the storytelling part — that's the easiest part of the process for me — but I was not so sure about the illustrative quality. In traditional animation, it's the change between the drawings that the eye tracks, not the individual drawings, which flash on screen too fast to be actually seen. So animation is about encoding your drawing in a visual language of shapes that you can track well enough to control that flow of change. Freeze-frame some of the best classic Disney films, and you'll find a lot of odd individual drawings. And that's fine, because they're not meant to be freeze-framed. Storyboarding is a workshopping process that the audience never sees, so everything is in short hand. But for comics, not only does a drawing need to tell the story, but it needs to hold its own as a permanent piece of art. Unfortunately, it's easy to go past illustrative and into decorative — where there's so much detail that the narrative aspect loses its momentum and clarity. An animation drawing only uses the minimum number of lines needed, as every line has to be carried through every drawing in the scene. Look at a Disney drawing, and you'll see that you can't remove a single line without losing critical information. I tried to use the same sense of economy with my illustrative elements, and hopefully get to a place where every line, every black area, every textural detail is needed.

From the storytelling standpoint, I used the same "film language" as for film: Mind the 180 line, control the horizon from panel to panel, treat the angles from panel to panel the same as I would from shot to shot, so that it "cuts" well, but most importantly, have each shot be from a definite point-of-view. What this shot is about and whose eyes we're seeing this through are the key questions. That doesn't mean somebody's literal POV (although sometimes it does), but it mostly means that the shot always represents someone's perception of the moment. I tried to bring the same kind of clarity and emotional and sensory effectiveness to the page that I would in a film shot. The only new dynamic was deciding how much to compress or decompress the storytelling. In the old days, masters of compressed storytelling like Jack Kirby would deliver a totally satisfying intergalactic epic full of human pathos in 18 pages. The style of stories we tell now has changed, so you can't compress it that much. Plus, as I mentioned earlier, I am a huge fan of graphic novels, like Watchmen, that have an incredible immersive quality. So I tried to find my own pace. Something that has textural richness with the world and characters, and yet moves at lighting speed when it must.

AD: You've mentioned Jack Kirby and others as inspirations. Can you describe the ways in which these and other inspirations flow into Silver?

SF: There was a weekly TV show late every Friday night when I was a kid, called Midnight Cinema, that showed black-and-white movies from the 1930's and 40's. They included sci-fi, horror, monsters, pulp-adventure, gangster, and screwball comedy. You had your mix of masterpieces from Fritz Lang, Todd Browning, etc; B-movie masterpieces like King Kong and Tarzan; and just regular B-movies with lost cities in the jungle or Chinese secret societies; and the Thin Man series.

"for comics, not only does a drawing need to tell the story, but it needs to hold its own as a permanent piece of art."

In my mind all that merged into one connected black-and-white universe where you would have noir gangsters, private eyes and washed-out prize-fighters in New York City, then hop on a plane, go to Africa and find yourself in a lost city that may or may not have been Atlantis. And if you stopped over in England and got lost around the moor, you might find out the hard way that you are in fact inside the Bram Stoker or Arthur Conan Doyle universe. That world was full of fun and mystery. Tales of when the world was a bigger, still undiscovered place. A pre-Google Earth world, if you will. So that world is basically the world of Silver, and the black-and-white/zip-a-tone presentation of it is meant to connect with the period, and its sense of mystery.

Meanwhile, different comics creators captured my imagination, and brought their own voices to some of those elements. Kirby, for instance, was the king of insane mythologies. Although some consider it one of his lesser works, I love The Eternals. In Silver, as I'm tackling Drah-Khann's ancient mythology, I'm humbly trying to channel some of Kirby's epicness and insanity. Another big influence on me was Will Eisner. The noir city stuff in Silver is heavily influenced by The Spirit. For example, the way I define the spaces by the light and shadows of giant windows, weird stairs that go on for miles, and the super dramatic angles and points of view are inspired by Eisner's composition. I'm also drawing a lot from his sense of character comedy that I find deliciously goofy. However, when I try to reconnect with a certain aspect of a creator's work, I make it a point to never look at the actual reference. I just try to reconnect with my emotional memory of reading or seeing it. That way I get the inspiration, but I am not overly influenced by it. The last reference I would give is Jim Steranko, who blew me away with his use of black, especially in his work from the 80's like his Outland adaptation, my favorite movie-to-comic adaptation ever. In fact, Finn's "burglar outfit" is a direct homage to Steranko's Nick Fury outfit.

AD: Where did you draw your vampire from? How much is from Bram Stoker's novel, and how much is outside information?

SF: I'm basically using well-accepted vampire lore, as defined in the original novel. But although silver was mentioned by Stoker, it was just in passing and doesn't play much of a part in his story. It's in later works like Blade that silver became a more prominent motif as "something that burns vampires". However, I gave the vampires a morbid fascination with silver, as I thought it made sense thematically, and worked perfectly for this story.

"It's not enough for the reader to simply understand what is going on in the art…It's about the ability to create moments and make the reader experience them immersively."

AD: The way you described Silver's world of mystery, where conmen can run into vampires, is really cool. But it raises the question: What inspired that particular combination?

SF: Regarding inspiration in general, and where ideas come from, for me, it has to be an organic thing. I really can't "decide" on ideas before I start. I have to sit down at my desk and surrender to the process. Hopefully get into a state where I turn on the tap, and good stuff comes out, flowing straight from my creative unconscious. That being said, I love to analyze it afterwards. So in hindsight, I think that vampires and conmen are perfect foils, as they are thematically very similar. They're both predatory in nature, operate at night, exist on the outskirts of society, and don't engage productively in emotional relationships like the rest of us. So I'm colliding the figuratively soulless with the literally soulless, and looking at what comes out. As the story progresses, this leads to an examination of what it means to feel alive. Is it enough just to walk around alone against the world? How long can you play that game and not feel dead inside? So we'll find that this is actually a redemption-versus-damnation story. Of course, I'm not going to spoil who gets what.

AD: In the creation of Silver, is there anything you've particularly enjoyed, or found challenging?

SF: Anybody working on their craft develops a bag of tricks over time. There are types of moments you know how to do because you've done them before — in writing, drawing, or storytelling in general — and you tend to "like" doing them because they feel comfortable. But there's also stuff that terrifies you because you've never had to deal with it. Over the years, when I was storyboarding on movies, there were always a couple of sequences that I would definitely not want, and sure enough that's what I would get. I would say, "Give me anything but that car chase," and they would look at each other and go, "Oh actually, that's what we have for you…" And each time, the thing I was dreading the most ended up being the most fun. For instance, I'm now drawing Issue #7, and there is a horse chase that I knew was coming, and that I have been dreading since I started the series, because until 3 days ago I didn't know how to draw a horse to save my life. But I had to do it, and now I can't get enough. That has been my experience in general, creatively. That's also how you can sustain a career, because you don't always get to work on projects that at face value cater to your passions. So you have to find your truth and connect creatively with any piece of storytelling you're in charge of. Sometimes you do like the subject matter, but sometimes you just find some unexpected truth. Of course, Silver is a passion project, so I'm excited about all of it, even if some of it is challenging. As for characters, there's not one character in Silver that I don't have a fondness and empathy for. I think I get where they're all coming from, and it's so much fun to give them a voice.pw

AD: Do you have advice for budding cartoonists?

SF: Ultimately, art needs a point of view, and it has to be yours. That being said, you need to communicate that point of view on two levels. Level 1 is clarity: People need to understand what you're trying to communicate. That is not trivial, because a professional artist may be asked to communicate

some very fine points of storytelling. Looking across at my other screen right now, I see a description in the script that says, “She looks away — she knows he’s right”. Well, that’s a subtle piece of information that you need to have the drawing, staging and overall storytelling skills to capture, or else you can’t tell the story. But then, Level 2 is effectiveness. It’s not enough for the reader to simply understand what is going on in the art; they must be made to feel a certain way about it, either on a sensory or emotional level. If you’re doing a car chase, it’s not enough that the reader understands who’s passing who. They also need to get a visceral feeling of speed and maybe danger as they read the page. It’s about the ability to create moments and make the reader experience them immersively.

So how do you get there? There really is a yin and a yang to this. I sometimes see portfolios that feel very inspired, and you already sense the artist’s voice coming through, but it’s hampered by technical limitations that make the art unable to communicate its point convincingly. In that case, the good news is that the part that’s missing is the part that one can learn. The artist needs to really engage with life-drawing, perspective, et cetera, to get to a higher level of draftsmanship. Meanwhile, you see other students whose work seems overly preoccupied with the technical side. You can see that they’re trying so hard to “do it right” that they’re completely disconnected from their own voice and inspiration. I know exactly how that feels, because I went from being the first case to being the second case, and it took me a while to get to where technique and creativity feed on each other. So I would advise young artists to try to work with the best mentors they can find, but instead of being paralyzed by the fact that you can’t draw like them, be inspired by the honesty and earnestness with which they do their thing. And then you do yours. Personally, the most inspirational artist I was lucky enough to work with is Glen Keane, and he taught me to see what was cool in any artwork, focus on that, and go from there. It was also important for me to see how hard he works, and struggles like anybody else. His trashcans were full of perfectly good drawings that just weren’t what he was looking for, for that particular moment. So that’s how I advise to go about it. Keep looking for the truth, but make it a conversation, not a quiz. There are no wrong answers.

DEEP FRIED DUCK STRIPS

but first...

...a bittersweet farewell
to our Graduating Ducks:
Ruby Lambie, Jalan Ember
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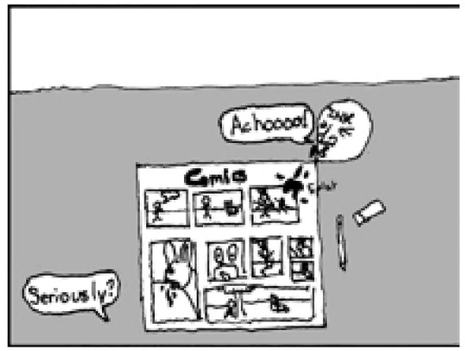
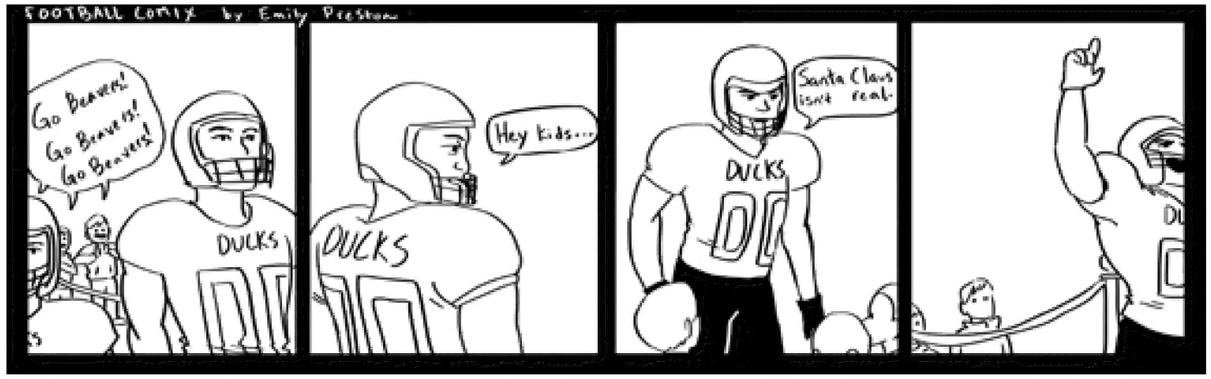
Nate Thomas





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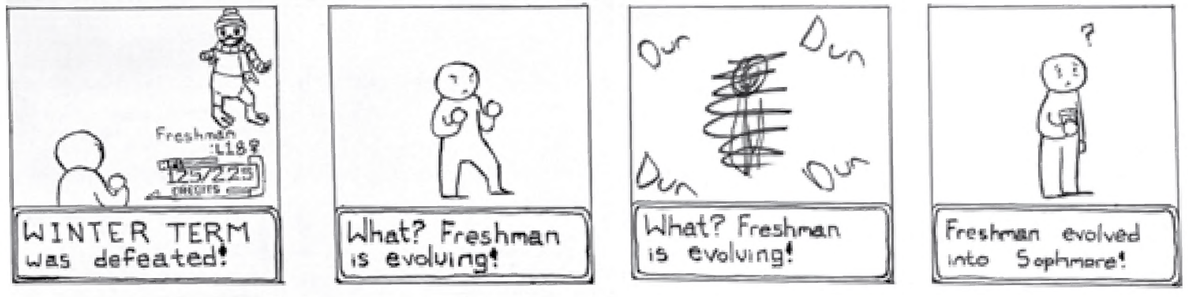

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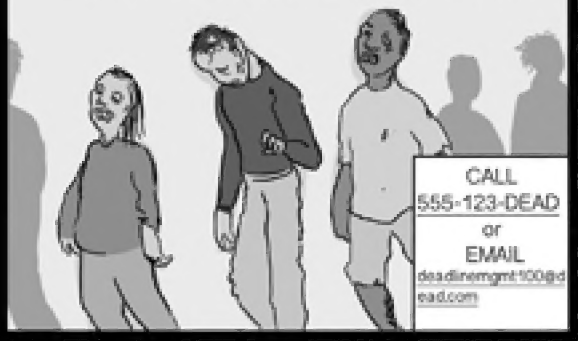

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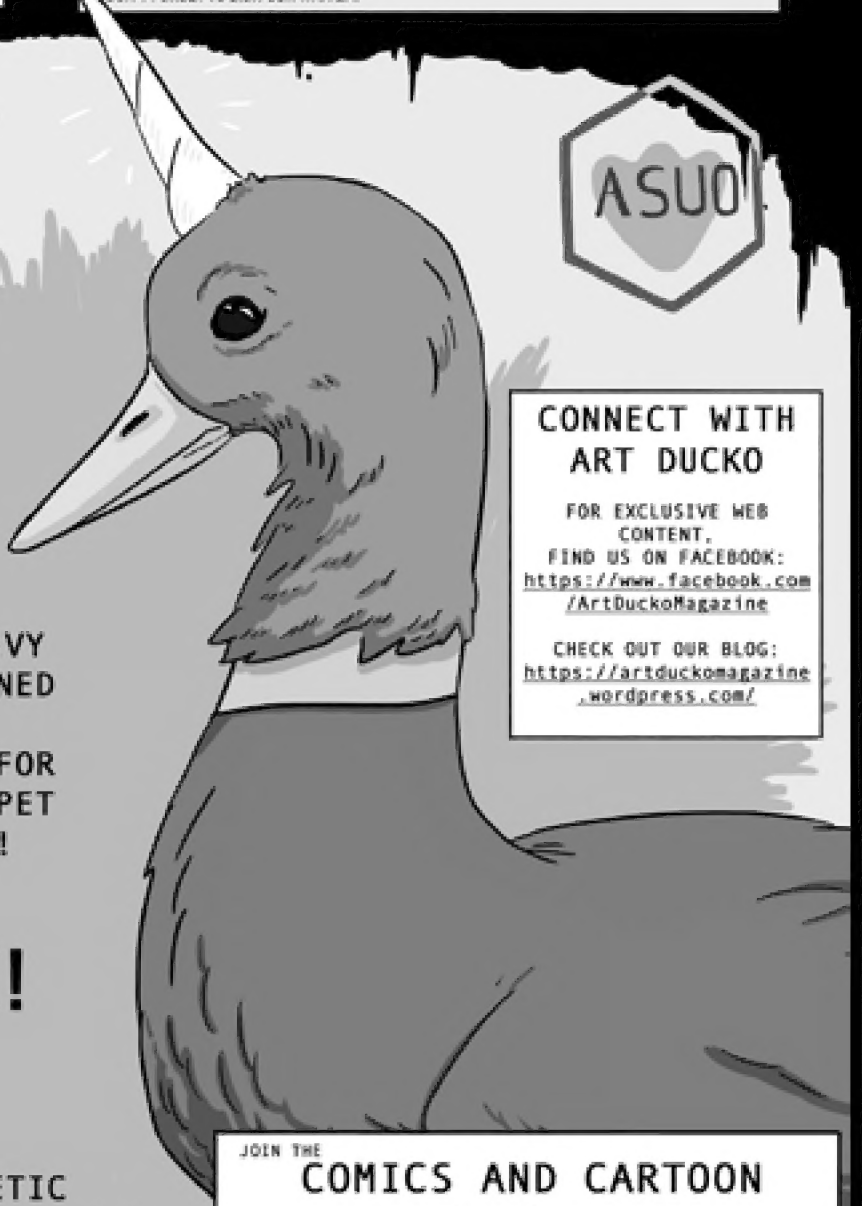

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